

MUNICH

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CHAPTER 11-1

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thirty-five U-boats to the German Navy. Captain Karl Doenitz, the Commander of Submarines, was developing new tactics involving operations in groups or "wolf packs," for which medium-sized, maneuverable craft were most suitable. But a number of senior staff officers opposed these novel ideas and forecast a repetition of First World War tactics, with large submarines operating alone and at great distances from their bases. Because he felt that the issue had not been satisfactorily resolved, and relying on Hitler's personal assurance that there would be no war before 1944, Raeder in 1936 put a virtual stop to new construction, with the result that only one U-boat was delivered in 1937 and nine in 1938.*

Of the three services it was the Luftwaffe which chiefly caused the fear of Germany which spread and deepened over Europe from 1935 on, and is most important in the story of Munich. From its birth, the Luftwaffe led a stormy life, for both political and professional reasons. Its Commander-in-Chief, Hermann Goering, was second only to Hitler in the hierarchy of the Third Reich, and he constantly threw his weight around in a way that aroused much jealousy and resentment in the Army and Navy. There was considerable opinion in German military circles that there was no reason for an independent air force, and that rather—as was then the case in the United States—the Army and Navy should each have an air component.

Thus the partnership of Goering with the professional soldiers was at best an uneasy one. Nevertheless, there was mutual interdependence. Little as they liked him, the generals and admirals were bound to support Goering's developmental task, for it was too plain for argument that, in any future war, effective air power over Europe and its adjacent waters would be vital to Germany's military success. Goering, for his part, was largely dependent upon the Army and, to a lesser extent, the Navy to staff and officer his new service. To be sure, Goering was able to recruit some of his associates from the German civil air line, the Deutsche Lufthansa, and from old comrades of his First World War days, some of whom had made careers as test pilots or flying instructors. His deputy, Erhard Milch, came from the Lufthansa; his technical director was the famous racing pilot Ernst Udet, and there were many other "Old Eagles," as they were called, who were glad to get back into uniform. But upwards of three quarters of the top-ranking leaders of the Luftwaffe were transferred from the officer corps of the Army and Navy, of whom some had flying experience, but more did not.

What was to be the Luftwaffe's principal mission in time of war? For England, vulnerable to air attack and with a comparatively small army, the answer had seemed clear: the RAF would defend its own homeland and bomb the enemy's—strategic defense and strategic attack. For Germany, a continental power relying primarily on a large army, it was plain that tactical support of the ground forces must be a basic and probably the major mission of the Luftwaffe,

* At the time of Munich, accordingly, forty-odd submarines were in commission, but some of the crews were still in the early training stage. Only eighteen more were delivered in 1939, and the lag in construction thus proved very costly to the Germans when the war came.

and the remaining question was whether or not it should also be equipped for long-range strategic employment.

Largely staffed as the Luftwaffe was with former Army officers who naturally tended to think of aircraft as aerial field artillery and overlook their strategic potential, it is not surprising that the Army viewpoint prevailed. The leading advocate of strategic capability was the first Luftwaffe Chief of Staff, General Walther Wever, and under his aegis the Junkers and Dornier aircraft companies started developmental work on a long-range heavy bomber. But Wever was killed in an airplane crash in June 1936, and in April 1937 his successor, General Albert Kesselring, ordered the work stopped.*

In the tactical field, however, the Germans made rapid advance in the techniques of air support. In contrast to the French, who scattered tanks and planes among the ground troops in comparatively small units, the Germans concentrated both for use en masse. The young French assistant air attaché, Captain Paul Stehlin, was allowed to view maneuvers in which the excellent results of the new air tactics made a deep impression, but Stehlin's voluminous and precise reports had no visible results in France.

Meanwhile, the Luftwaffe was both growing physically and maturing organizationally. Aircraft alone do not an air force make, and the Luftwaffe was useless for combat purposes until airfields and communications were built and developed, schools and headquarters established, and trainees graduated and assembled in operational units. With the benefit of clandestine training in Russia until 1933, and in Italy from 1933 to 1935, the first combat-ready formations were established in 1936. By the end of the year there were over a hundred operational squadrons of about ten aircraft each, and by the end of 1937 these numbers had more than doubled. During these same two years, the German aircraft manufacturers developed the basic types which were to constitute the Luftwaffe's backbone throughout the war—the Heinkel 111 and Dornier 17 level bombers; the Junkers 87 dive bomber (Stuka), and the Messerschmitt 109 fighter.

And so from the mines and mills and industrial laboratories of the Ruhr and the Rhine, from the Fatherland's farmlands and teeming cities, and from the martial skills and traditions of two centuries, the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich drew the breath of life and gathered strength. For the professional soldier, these were halcyon days, as recruits, weapons, new and interesting tactical problems, and promotions all came ever faster. Testifying at the Nuremberg trials, senior generals such as Johannes Blaskowitz and Hans Reinhardt agreed that during these years before 1938 there was hardly "a single officer who did not back up Hitler in his extraordinary success," and that "there was no reason to oppose Hitler, since he produced the results which they desired." Perhaps the most comprehensive and articulate summary of the military attitude toward Hitler

* The decision reflected more than narrow tactical thinking. Germany's resources were large but not unlimited, and construction of an air force sufficiently equipped for both tactical and strategic use would have taxed the available supplies of rubber, oil, and other crucial materials to a point that would have seriously cut down on Army armament requirements.

was written a decade before the Wehrmacht during

In the early years of the Weimar Republic, Hitler. He fulfilled his promise to no longer choose to remain in the shadows of fulness. No thing was to be done but rearmament carried out with the best of those days. The justice, the labor, many as a political movement with the masses, betrayed by his massive politics, where no decisive reason only given us back had freed all Germany. Treaty of Versailles could achieve, he thought, and increase.

No general raising have appeared at the time. The approval of more convincing respect, to some merely the tradition.

. . . To sum up, at least up to 1938, success. . . .

. . . One should not be the main. Hitler, first, when we begin, tiny.

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A "man of destiny" who shaped the shape that destiny took. Many who were loyal to the countries. If Hitler, Hitler the Chancellor.

This growing respect for the Olympic Games in 1936. Thousands of people were used with great effect. Fuehrer himself was

* Hitler's manifest aversion for Americanism was highlighted in Westbre